

Reflections on Life-long Learning for a Post-Truth World by Rosemary Hipkins

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I've known Rosemary Hipkins for many years through the many conversations, projects, and professional exchanges that have shaped my own thinking about learning, knowledge, and the future of education. Throughout that time, I have come to value not only her scholarship and professional expertise, but also her intellectual integrity, curiosity, and willingness to question her own assumptions. All of those qualities are evident in her latest book, *Life-long Learning for a Post-Truth World*.

The book weaves together ideas from the philosophy of education, theories of learning, complexity thinking, science education, and indigenous knowledge systems as it explores a question that feels increasingly urgent in our times: *What is truth in a post-truth world, and how should we educate young people if they are to have any hope of navigating it safely and responsibly?*

As an experienced science educator, researcher, curriculum writer, and lifelong learner, Rosemary draws on more than forty years of professional experience to examine this question. Yet what struck me most while reading the book was not the depth of her expertise - although that is considerable - but the deeply personal way in which she shares her learning journey. Throughout the chapters she reflects honestly on occasions where her own beliefs, assumptions, and ways of knowing have been challenged and reshaped. Rather than presenting herself as an expert dispensing wisdom, she positions herself as a learner, inviting readers to learn alongside her.

The title itself prompted some reflection for me. My initial assumption was that the reference to "life-long learning" would focus primarily on the need to prepare young people for a future in which learning continues long after they leave school. While that theme is certainly present, I soon realised that Rosemary is also telling the story of her own lifelong learning journey. The ideas in this book have been formed, tested, revised, and refined across decades of professional practice and inquiry. In many ways, the book is itself an example of what lifelong learning looks like in action.

One of the recurring themes throughout the book is the challenge of living in what Rosemary describes as a post-truth world. Her discussion of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation provides a useful framework for understanding the forces that increasingly shape public discourse and influence what people come to believe. These ideas are not presented as abstract concepts but are woven through the book as examples of the complex challenges facing educators, learners, and societies today.

What I particularly appreciated was the way Rosemary helps readers engage with complexity without oversimplifying it. Through storytelling, metaphor, personal narrative, and cultural insights, she makes difficult ideas accessible while resisting the temptation to reduce them to easy answers. Her background as a science educator is

evident in the rigour of her questioning, yet she is equally clear about the limitations of relying on any single knowledge system.

This interweaving of different ways of knowing was one of the aspects of the book I found most challenging and inspiring. Rosemary argues that there is value in drawing on multiple knowledge traditions, including both scientific and indigenous knowledge systems. Rather than positioning these in opposition, she explores how they can enrich one another and contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex issues we face.

Among the many insights in the book, two values stood out for me in particular: curiosity and gratitude. These resonated strongly with my own work around learner agency and reminded me that our capacity to learn and adapt is shaped as much by our dispositions as by our knowledge. In a world increasingly characterised by uncertainty and complexity, these seem to me to be precisely the qualities we need to nurture in both ourselves and the young people we serve.

Perhaps what I admired most about this book is Rosemary's willingness to embrace vulnerability. Despite her extensive expertise, she writes with a refreshing honesty about uncertainty, doubt, and change. She models the very habits of mind she hopes to encourage in others: openness to new ideas, willingness to challenge one's assumptions, and the courage to remain curious when certainty would be more comfortable.

This is particularly evident in the final chapter, *Exploring a Way Forward*, where Rosemary engages in a dialogue with her long-time critical friend Bronwen Cowie. Rather than concluding with a definitive set of recommendations, the chapter offers something far more valuable. It allows us to observe thoughtful people grappling with important questions together, testing ideas, challenging assumptions, and exploring possibilities. In doing so, Rosemary demonstrates that the path forward is unlikely to emerge from certainty or prescription, but from ongoing dialogue and collective sense-making.

My copy of this book is now heavily annotated, with pages folded and margins crowded with notes - a sure sign, for me, that it is a book worth returning to. I know I will revisit many of its ideas as I continue to wrestle with the challenges and opportunities facing education today.

Life-long Learning for a Post-Truth World does not offer simplistic solutions, nor does it seek refuge in the certainties that science, policy, or ideology can sometimes promise. Instead, it helps clarify the issues, illuminate the forces shaping them, and invites us into a process of inquiry that is both intellectually rigorous and deeply human.

At a time when educators are constantly confronted by competing claims about what is wrong with education and how it should be fixed, Rosemary's book offers a welcome alternative. It challenges us to think more deeply, to question more carefully, and to remain open to learning. For that reason alone, it deserves a wide readership.

I thoroughly recommend it to educators, school leaders, researchers, policymakers, and anyone interested in how we might navigate the complexities of learning and living in an uncertain future.

Endorsements

“In a world awash with certainty and simplistic solutions, Rosemary Hipkins offers a thoughtful invitation to embrace curiosity, question assumptions, and learn our way through complexity.”

Or:

“A timely and thought-provoking guide to learning, knowing, and navigating uncertainty in a post-truth world.”